

FITNESS

Start a Walking Workout

Walking is America's favorite workout for good reasons. You don't need a gym membership. It's more fun than a stationary bike. And it's more convenient than going to a swimming pool. Walking can be done anytime, anywhere with anyone. You can always walk and how far you go is up to you! Unfortunately, some people think walking is too easy to make a difference. Studies show, however, that regular exercise, even walking, reduces the risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and some cancers. For the best health protection, the American Institute for Cancer Research advises people to exercise at a moderate level one hour a day, like taking a brisk walk and at a vigorous level one hour a week, such as a game of tennis or other more strenuous aerobic activity.

Answers to Common Walking Concerns

1. What if I haven't been exercising regularly?

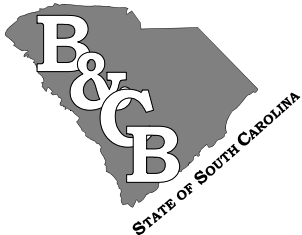
First check with your doctor before starting any exercise program, especially if you are over age 40. Then begin with a relaxed, 10-minute walk around the block. Each week, gradually increase your speed and time, until after 10 weeks or so you are walking a total of 30 minutes a day at a brisk pace. If you can, continue to work toward an hour a day in total time spent walking.

2. I am a slower walker. How can I walk faster?

If you swing your arms faster, you'll walk faster because your arms and legs move in sync. Bend your elbows at a 90-degree angle to swing them faster, but don't swing them higher than chest level. Also, try to push off with the balls of your feet and take quicker steps, instead of lengthening your stride. Your body will naturally choose the stride that works best for you. To prevent physical discomfort, maintain an upright posture, with your head, shoulders, hips, knees and feet vertically aligned.

3. What shoes should I wear?

Any good pair of shoes is suitable for walking, as long as they feel comfortable to you. Proper fit, however, is crucial. When buying shoes, wear socks that you will use for walking. Also try to shop late in the day because your feet swell throughout the day. Lastly, along with the length and width of shoes, check toe space. You should be able to move your toes without restriction.



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